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FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0118
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0023
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 0025
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ OCT MONTEVIDEO 0010
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 0029
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

UNCLAS ASUNCION 000700

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS
SECSTATE FOR WHA/BSC MDRUCKER, MDASCHBACH
WHA/PDA JDICKSON, CPETERSON
IIP/WHA PCOZZENS, SCARPER
ECA/A/E/USS ARUSTAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OEXC](#) [OIIP](#) [SCUL](#) [IAII](#) [SOCI](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PA](#)
SUBJECT: U.S. OFFERS SUPPORT TO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

¶1. (U) Summary: Ambassador Ayalde and A/PAO visited newly appointed National Institute of the Indigenous (INDI) President Lida Acuna on October 13. Acuna explained the many challenges INDI faces and accepted the Ambassador's offer to partner with Post on indigenous issues. End summary.

¶2. (U) Indigenous issues continue to be a domestic and international problem for Lugo's government. The country has not fully complied with binding Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACH) rulings against Paraguay in 2005 and 2006 despite a February 26 presidential decree creating an inter-governmental commission to implement the decisions. The Senate voted down a land expropriation measure in favor of the Yakye Axa indigenous community October 15, citing inter-communal conflicts and NGO interference. Other cases remain pending before the IACH, including the case of the Xakmok Kasek. Meanwhile, indigenous communities routinely demonstrate against the government by camping in plazas in downtown Asuncion. Against this background, President Lugo appointed Ms. Acuna to head INDI on August 20 after an eight-month vacancy in the position. Acuna is an accomplished lawyer and graduated from the nation's best university.

¶3. (U) During her meeting with the Ambassador, Ms. Acuna explained her current challenges: establishing daily operations, creating a public relations office, and developing a long-term strategic plan. (Note: Ms. Acuna shares an office with one of her staffers and does not have her own computer. End note.) Acuna wants to establish INDI branches outside the capital so that the rural indigenous communities will not have to travel to Asuncion to file official paperwork. The Ambassador noted that the Office of Defense Cooperation's Humanitarian Assistance Program is considering establishing emergency centers in three different parts of the country, and that INDI might explore the possibility of co-locating its branches.

¶4. (U) Acuna wants to end extended direct entitlement payments and food subsidies to indigenous communities from the Social Action Secretariat (SAS). These programs were put in place under previous administrations to appease indigenous leaders and are unsustainable. The Ambassador offered to research best practices regarding indigenous affairs and organization to help INDI press its case with the Social Cabinet.

15. (U) The Ambassador also expressed the Embassy's interest in supporting INDI and Paraguayan indigenous communities through public diplomacy programs such as ECA's "Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders" and an IIP DVC in November with two American experts on indigenous culture, education, and assimilation. Ms. Acuna enthusiastically welcomed these opportunities and committed to recruiting qualified students for the ECA program and sending attendees to the DVC.

16. (SBU) Comment: Lida Acuna's exceptional credentials leave the impression that she is overqualified for a job that has her starting from scratch. Past administrations have left no records and subsidies, and programs were implemented without criteria. She will have to muster tremendous patience to advance her agenda through an underfunded bureaucracy and unfriendly Congress. Post worries this challenge may get the best of her and INDI will soon be searching for yet another replacement. End comment.
AYALDE